



'Amateur burglar extraordinary—that's what George Brokay wanted to be—and he got his wish! But he never knew there could be so many angles to a simple job of house-breaking until he stepped into that darkened room—just in

Time For Murder

By

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With his bare fingers felt
of the woman's wrist.

CHAPTER ONE

Brokay Goes West

GEORGE BROKAY latchkeyed the front door of his palatial residence, where he maintained deluxe bachelor quarters. There was a yawn twisting his lips, and complete boredom in his eyes.

The hour was but five minutes after midnight, which was no time for a wealthy, eligible young bachelor to be returning home. And George Brokay was

doing it only because he could think of no better place to go.

His hand reached for the light switch and was almost on the point of pushing the button, when he noticed a ribbon of light coming from under the side of a doorway at the end of the hall.

He paused, staring at the ribbon of light.

Grigsby, the butler, should have retired long since. Brokay had left specific orders that his valet was not to wait up for him. There was, therefore, no good

reason why anyone should be in the library. Yet, unmistakably, a light was burning in there, and, as Brokay watched the strip of yellow which showed beneath the door, he saw moving shadows cross it.

There was someone in the room; someone who was moving.

Brokay stepped silently into the little den which was at the left of the corridor. He noiselessly opened the drawer of a desk and took out an automatic. Moving as silently as a shadow, he slipped through the dark corridor and paused, with his hand on the knob of the door to the library.

He listened and could hear nothing.

He turned the knob slowly, exerting pressure on the door as he did so, so that the latch would give no audible click. When he felt the knob turn as far as it would go, he pulled on the door, opening it an inch at a time.

The door swung back upon well-oiled hinges. Brokay, the wicked-looking automatic held in his right hand, kept to one side so that he could see through the opening of the door.

THE portion of the library which was visible through the partially opened door was the corner which contained the wall safe. The panel which concealed the safe had been swung open. A man was standing in front of it, moving with swiftly silent rapidity.

Brokay watched him with fascination.

The man took a cake of soft yellow laundry soap, kneaded the soap into a cup-shaped container, which he fastened to the door of the safe, just at the point where the door joined the body of the safe. Then, with deft fingers, he pressed the soap along the crack between the door and the safe. The man's fingers moved so swiftly and so capably that Brokay realized he was watching a master workman.

It was when the man bent to a leather

satchel on the floor and took out a bottle of thick, slightly yellowish, viscid liquid, and was about to pour a measure of that liquid into the cup-shaped container at the top of the safe, that Brokay announced his presence.

"Don't move," he said.

The man was facing the safe, the bottle held in his right hand. The cork had been removed. As Brokay spoke, the man froze into immobility, without moving so much as a muscle.

Brokay, who had rather expected the man to give a guilty start, to whirl and face him with terror upon a countenance grayed with fear, thought that perhaps the man had not heard him.

"I said don't move," Brokay repeated. "I've got you covered with a gun. I'm rather expert in its use. I most certainly shall drill you right through the back if you make any sudden moves or try to escape."

The man still kept his back turned and spoke over his shoulder.

"Don't ever do that again," he said.

"Don't ever do what?" asked Brokay, puzzled and interested at the well-modulated tone of the man's voice.

"Don't ever interrupt a box-man when he's pouring 'soup' into a box. I was just getting ready to make a jamb-shot, and you came along and pulled that line of yours. Don't you know that there's enough nitroglycerine in this bottle to blow all of us to Kingdom Come? It would wreck the house. If I dropped it, it would probably go off. There wouldn't be two sticks left standing around here. They wouldn't find enough of us to be able to tell what had happened. You couldn't even have a funeral."

"Well," Brokay said, "what of it?"

"I'm just telling you," the man said, "don't ever do that again."

Slowly and deliberately he inserted a cork in the bottle, stooped and put the

bottle back in the bag. During all of this time, he had kept his back turned to Brokay.

There was a twinkle of lazy humor in Brokay's eyes. "Be very careful with your hands," he said, "when you take them out of that bag. I'd hate to have to shoot you."

nPHE man straightened, turned toward > Brokay, presenting a face that was quick and alert, eyes that were a dark brown, and dancing with excitement.

"Don't worry," he said, "I know when I'm caught. But you haven't got me in the hands of the police yet. I've been in tighter positions than this before."

"Would you mind," Brokay asked with genuine curiosity in his voice, "telling me exactly what you expected to find in that safe?"

"Oh, just a few trinkets," the man said.

"Did you have any specific article in mind?" Brokay inquired.

"No. Why?"

"Nothing," Brokay said, "only, I suppose there's no harm in telling you now, I happen to have a very valuable diamond necklace that I put in that safe yesterday."

"Wouldn't that have been a break for me!" the man said.

"And no one tipped you off?" Brokay inquired.

"Not a soul. That's on the level. I was just on the prowl, and this joint looked easy to me. I figured that a young, good-looking bachelor like you, who had inherited a million and boosted that million to about five million by good business judgment, was pretty likely to have a lot of stuff hanging around the house. In other words, **I figured you'd be careless with money.

"It's rather interesting, in case you're at all interested in psychology. A person who has acquired money by scrimping and saving doesn't usually have anything

valuable around the house unless he's one of the kind that distrusts the banks and hoards his money. A sap that makes money easily and rapidly gets careless with things. He's very much inclined to get pieces of value and leave them hanging around in safes that don't offer much more protection against a burglar than a bread box."

"Look here," Brokay said suddenly, "you're no ordinary crook!"

"Who said I was?" asked the burglar.

"You're talking, of course," Brokay said, "to gain time. You're simply stalling for a break. You figure that if you can get my interest, you're going to delay my call for the police."

The burglar laughed, and there was genuine amusement in his laugh.

"And," Brokay went on, "you've got rather a magnetic personality. You think that if you can engage me in conversation and get me to have a liking for you, I won't be quite so ready to pull the trigger when you rush me."

The smile faded from the man's face. "Listen, brother," he said, "you're too good a mind reader. No wonder you made four or five million bucks in a couple of years."

"Apparently, you've looked up quite a bit of my history," Brokay told him.

"Oh, sure, we always do that. We know the kind of a lay we're running into before we crack the joint."

Brokay suddenly lowered the gun. "Look here," he said, "suppose I'd make a bargain with you?"

"What sort of a bargain?" asked the man, his eyes suddenly hard and appraising.

"A bargain by which you can gain your freedom," Brokay said. "I wouldn't call the police."

The man's eyes studied Brokay's face carefully. "I suppose," he said, "some jane's got some letters of yours. You

want me to bust into her apartment and rob the safe, or something of that sort."

"No," George Brokay said, "the thing that I have in mind is something entirely different."

"Well, let's hear it."

"What's your name?" Brokay asked.

"You can call me West—Sam West," said the burglar.

"Is that your name?"

"If you don't like West, you can call me East—William East would be a good name. Or, there's nothing wrong with North—you might call me Carl North."

"I think I'll call you Sam West," Brokay said.

"O. K., chief. Now tell me what's on your mind."

"OROKAY abruptly tossed the gun to the big library table, crossed the room to an overstuffed leather chair, dropped into it and put his feet on a footstool.

"Sit down, West," he said, "and have a cigarette."

Sam West's eyes slithered across to the gun.

"Listen," he said, "you're taking chances. We're playing opposite sides of this game, you and I, and you haven't put me on my honor, or anything of that sort, so let's not have any misunderstandings."

Brokay gestured toward the gun. "Go ahead and pick it up if you want to," he said. "I'm not going to turn you over to the police, anyway."

Sam West edged slightly further toward the table.

"Go on with your proposition," he said.

"You know about me," Brokay said. "I inherited some money. My uncle, who left me that money, had skimmed and slaved all of his life. He left me more than a million dollars, but he lived like a pauper. He didn't get any good out of his money. I took his money and started in-

vesting it. I didn't invest it in stocks and bonds, the way my uncle had; I invested it in little business ventures, where I took a chance on my judgment of character and human nature. I made a lot more money. Then there was nothing else to do. I've got more money than I need. I drift around like a butterfly. I go to balls and teas. I dance and talk. I clip coupons, and ride horseback. I travel in the best social circles in the city. And what has it done to me?"

Sam West let his right hand slide over to the top of the table, so that it was within some two feet of the gun. "I'll bite," he said, his eyes hard and glittering. "What has it done?"

"It's made me bored with life," George Brokay said. "It's made me feel like an old man, when I'm not yet thirty. Now, what I want is to get away from the whole damn business. I want to have some adventure; I want to have some fun. I want to have some excitement. That's the reason I'm making this proposition to you."

"What's the proposition?" West asked.

"I want to become a burglar," Brokay said.

Sam West, whose hand had slid across the table until it was less than a foot from the butt of the gun, became rigidly immobile. "You *what!*" he asked.

"I want to become a burglar," Brokay said. "You're getting a great kick out of life; you're living a life of excitement; you're matching your wits against the police; you're taking chances all the time."

"You're taking chances on getting put away for a long, long time in the big house," Sam West said bitterly. "Did you ever stop to think what that would mean? Locked in a stone cell with iron bars staring you in the eyes all the time? No women—no life—no action—no variety—no—"

"That's exactly it," Brokay said. "That's what makes the game so interest-

ing. If there wasn't a big penalty if you lost, there wouldn't be so much fun winning. That's why I can't get a kick out of gambling. No matter how much I lose, I still have plenty left. Money means nothing to me."

"By God!" Sam West said, his eyes staring intently into Brokay's steady, gray eyes, "I believe you mean it!"

"Of course I mean it," George Brokay said.

CAM WEST abruptly leaned forward and picked up the gun from the table. He snapped the mechanism back far enough to make sure that there was a cartridge in the chamber.

Brokay laughed at him. "Now what are you going to do?" he asked.

Sam West pocketed the gun. His eyes were glittering. "I'm going to ask you a couple of questions," he said.

"Go ahead and ask them."

"Who do you want to rob?"

"Oh, anyone," Brokay said.

"What do you want to do with the stuff?"

"I'd send it back after I'd stolen it," Brokay said carelessly. "Or give it to you, or give it to some poor panhandler I met on the street, and then I'd send the man I'd robbed a check for about twice the value of the stuff I'd taken, so that he wouldn't be losing anything."

"A check would hardly be advisable," Sam West said, a smile twisting the corners of his mouth.

"Well," Brokay told him, "we could leave him the money on his doorstep or send it to him by messenger, or break into the house again and drop it in a bureau drawer. I don't care how he gets it, just so he gets it."

He made an impatient gesture.

"Can't you get the point?" he said. "I'm fed up with life. I'm a good judge of character. I look at you and see in

you a man who is living an existence that is outside the law. From a moral standpoint, it's probably wicked. You'll probably wind up by being killed, executed or imprisoned. But I can see from the expression on your face that you're enjoying life while you're living, and I'd like to enjoy life with you for a while."

"And," said Sam West, "you don't know one single thing about me, or who I am, or where I come from."

"I have invested a great deal of money during the past few years," Brokay said, "because of my ability to judge character. I can see that you're no ordinary crook. I don't know your history and I don't care to. All I want is a partner in excitement."

Sam West suddenly strode across the room, his hand outstretched. "O. K., chief," he said, "you've made a sale."

The two men shook hands.

"And," Brokay said, "I want to start tonight."

Sam West slipped a leather-covered notebook from his pocket, turned the pages, read a notation, then looked up at Brokay and grinned.

"No questions asked?" he inquired.

"No questions asked," Brokay said.

"O. K.," Sam West told him. "Put your hat back on. We're going out."

CHAPTER TWO

Monkey Business

CHADOWS clung to the vacant house like soft road tar clings to an automobile tire. Crouched in the shadows, George Brokay peered at the dark structure which blotted out the stars.

"And there's no one home?" he asked, in a whisper.

"We're just taking a chance on one person," Sam West said. "Everyone else is accounted for. The servants are out. The chauffeur sleeps out over the garage

in an apartment. He couldn't hear a stick of dynamite explode in the house."

"Who's the one person we're taking chances on?" Brokay asked in a low, cautious voice.

"She's a young woman," Sam West said. "You should be interested in her, because she's the same sort that you are—a woman who has more money than she knows what to do with."

"Who is it?" Brokay inquired curiously.

"Her name's Ordway," West told him, "Gladys Ordway. She's about twenty-six—perhaps twenty-seven, and she's easy to look at."

"You've met her?" asked Brokay.

"Never seen her in my life, but I know what she looks like and I've got all the dope on her."

"You've looked this place up?"

"Oh, yes, I look up every place before I go into it."

"Did you know that you were likely to encounter me tonight?"

"No. I knew that you had gone to the Van Dusen's, and I knew that the affair wouldn't be over until two or three o'clock in the morning. I thought I had at least an hour."

"That's what I got for being bored with the party," Brokay said.

"*This* is what you get for being bored with the party," West told him, and chuckled. "Come on, we'll try the window over there on the south side—the one that has the shade tree growing near it."

"You mean we'll climb up in the shade tree?"

"No, we'll take advantage of the shadow. Let's go."

"Suppose the window's locked?" Brokay asked.

"I'll show you all about that," Sam West said.

He led the way across the narrow strip

of lawn, to the place where the tree flung an inky shadow against the house. Calmly, methodically, he took a small leather case from beneath his coat, selected a curved steel bar, fitted a telescopic handle to it, placed one end [if the curved bar beneath the sill of the window, and pressed downward.

There was a sharp clicking noise, and the window rose for an inch or two, shivering slightly. Sam West casually inserted gloved fingers and raised the sash. "Remember," he said in a whisper, "no matter how inconvenient it is, keep the gloves on your hands. We don't want to leave any fingerprints."

With the lithe grace of an athlete, West swung up from the ground, flung one leg over the window sill and then disappeared in the darkness. "Want a hand?" he whispered.

"No," said Brokay, and slid up and across the sill as easily as West had performed the operation.

From the darkness, the burglar watched him approvingly. "You keep in pretty good condition," he said.

"Fair," Brokay remarked nonchalantly.

"I've got a floor plan of the house," Sam West said. "The safe that we want is in the bedroom, on the second floor. We won't bother with anything else, but we'll go right up there."

"What's in it?" Brokay inquired.

"You can never tell," West said, leading the way to a corridor, where the beam of his spotlight showed a huge winding staircase which stretched upward, into the realm of mysterious darkness above the circle of illumination.

"We take the stairs," said Sam West.

"17"EEPING his feet well to the sides of the stairs, so that no creak would betray him, and motioning to Brokay to do the same, Sam West padded upward. As he traveled, the flashlight sent its beam

darting about to the right and left, up and down, dissipating the shadows.

There was not a sound in the dark house. It might have been untenanted, for all the noises that came to Brokay's straining ears.

Sam West found the upper corridor, "turned and touched Brokay with his hand, guiding him gently to the left and through a door which was open. West crossed a room, his feet making no noise as they moved across the carpeted floor with a sure-footed caution which would have done credit to a stalking puma. He paused with his hand on the knob of a door.

"Get ready for anything," he whispered. Gently, he disengaged the latch and opened the door.

The room was dark and silent.

"Guess we're O. K.," said West, and pushed the button on the flashlight, which sent the pencil of brilliant illumination darting about the room.

The light showed that the bedroom was that of a woman; that it was handsomely appointed. It showed a dresser on which glittered toilet articles in an orderly array. The beam of the flashlight slithered across the reflecting surface of a mirror, then darted across the bed.

There was something which caught the gleam of the flashlight, a white silent something which caused Brokay to stiffen, caused Sam West to give a quick flick of his wrist, sending the flashlight back so that the beam rested on the bed.

Brokay gave an involuntary exclamation of horror.

The body of a young woman lay upon the bed—a young woman who was clad only in the most filmy of underthings. The body was beautifully formed. Filmy lace rippled over firm, white bosom. The hair was a warm, rich brown, and was spread about in a tangled confusion, contrasting with the deathly pallor of the

face. The legs were stockinged, but there were no slippers on the feet.

Clinging to the top of the bed, his tail wrapped around and around the brass of the bedstead, was a monkey which sat perfectly motionless, staring with wide eyes at the flashlight.

"Good God!" said Brokay. "What's that?"

"Steady!" said Sam West, and there was the noise of rustling garments which accompanied swift motion as the burglar reached to his hip pocket and pulled out a revolver.

For a long moment the two men stood silent, staring at the form on the bed, at the monkey which perched motionless on the top of the bed.

"Let's get out of this," said Sam West.

"Wait a minute," Brokay told him, "we've got to find out what's happened. Maybe the woman is unconscious."

"Not me," said Sam West. "We're going to get out. We can't tell what's going to happen here. Remember, we're flirting with the electric chair."

Brokay took two steps toward the bed. As he moved, the monkey screamed with terror. Sam West switched out the light and left the room in darkness.

"Wait a minute," called Brokay. "You can't leave that way, West."

There was no noise from Sam West, who moved with such feline stealth that his footfalls were silent.

TDRKAY turned and made a lunge toward where he thought the burglar would be. His questing fingers encountered only darkness. He stumbled, lurched against the wall and then groped with his fingers until he found a light switch. He snapped on the light switch.

Sam West was not in the room. The monkey started to chatter with terror a nervous, hysterical chatter that sounded almost like the clicking of castanets.

Brokay flung himself toward the door, wrenched it open, looked out into the corridor and caught the gleam of Sam West's spotlight.

"Come back here, West," he said, "or I'm going to shoot."

The flashlight snapped out. The corridor was as dark as pitch.

"I mean it," Brokay said.

"Listen," came Sam West's voice, sounding cold and ominous, "that's a game two can play at. But remember, there's been a murder committed here. You start shooting and you're going to alarm the neighborhood, and if you don't quit making such a confounded racket, you're going to do it anyway. Do you know what it means for us to be caught here?"

"I say come on back," Brokay said. "We're going to see what we can do."

There was a moment of silence, then he heard Sam West sigh. "You," said the burglar, "are just about foolish enough to start making a racket. Come on, if it's going to suit you any better. What do you want to do, hold a *post mortem*?" ~

"I want to find out something about this business," Brokay said.

He turned and walked back toward the room, conscious of the fact that the burglar was padding noiselessly along just behind him. As Brokay entered the room, he felt something hard prodding into his back.

"I'm just sticking a rod on you," the burglar said, "so that you'll know who's running this show."

Brokay said nothing, but advanced into the bedroom. He stretched forth a cautious hand and touched the bare flesh of the woman's arm, then, muttering an exclamation, he took off his glove.

"Leave that glove on!" Sam West cautioned. "You leave a fingerprint here and it'll mean the electric chair."

Brokay still remained silent, but with his bare fingers felt the flesh of the woman's wrist.

"She's dead," he said, after a moment, "but she hasn't been dead longer than a few minutes. The body is still warm."

"I tell you we've got to get out of here," Sam West said.

The monkey on the bed continued to sit and chatter, but it was no longer motionless. It swayed back and forth rhythmically.

"For God's sake!" said Sam West, "Shut up that damned monkey!"

Brokay looked at the little animal. "It's simply terrified to death," he said. He stretched forth his arms and made crooning noises.

The monkey stared at him. After a moment the chattering sounds of terror ceased, the moist brown eyes regarded Brokay speculatively. Then, so suddenly as to startle Brokay into dropping his arms, the monkey unfastened its tail and came through the air in a long, flying leap.

The monkey caught Brokay by the shoulder of the coat, climbed so that he sat huddled against Brokay's neck, and, after a moment, Brokay felt the furry tail wind around his neck. The monkey ceased to chatter.

"Poor little devil, he's shivering as though he'd been in a cold bath," Brokay said.

"Well," Sam West said, "this is your party. What are you going to do now?"

"I want to find out something about how she died," said Brokay, and bent over the form.

"Watch those fingerprints!" the burglar exclaimed. "Get that glove back on if you value your life!"

BROKAY paid no attention to him, but held the glove in his left hand while he placed his right hand on the bed and bent over the still figure.

"Expensive lingerie," said Sam West. "Looks as though she was dressing to go out for a party. She had a heavy date of some kind and was going to put on her best clothes."

"Here's the wound," Brokay said in a low voice. "It's a stabbing wound just over the heart."

Sam West turned a practical eye upon the discoloration which blemished the smooth white flesh. "That's where it came out," he said. "It must have gone in the other side."

"You mean from the back?" asked Brokay.

"Uh-huh," said Sam West.

Brokay hesitated for a moment then, placing his hand tenderly back of the girl's shoulder, turned the body. As he did so, he stiffened with horror as he saw the red pool which had gathered beneath the left shoulder.

"Told you so," said Sam West.

"Good heavens!" said Brokay.

"Satisfied now?" the burglar inquired.

"Certainly not," Brokay said. "We've got to do something about this. We've got to find out who she is. We've got to notify the police."

"Got to what!" exclaimed the burglar.

"Got to notify the police."

"And just who are you going to say is calling?" asked Sam West.

"We can explain," Brokay said.

Sam West's laugh was scornful. "Explain nothing," he said. "You're simply flirting with tike electric chair."

"But I can give them credentials," said Brokay. "I can explain to them that—"

"You might have an hour ago," Sam West said, "but you're a burglar now; don't forget that. You can't explain to them what you were doing in this house. You can't explain how you crawled in through a window that had been jimmied. You can talk until you're black in the

face, but you can't make anyone listen to you or believe you."

Brokay was silent as a full realization of his predicament crashed home upon him.

"What's more," said Sam West, "we've got to get out of here. We don't know what's happened. We don't know the motive for the murder. All we know is that the girl has been murdered, and that if anyone catches us here, we're going to have the murder pinned on us, just as sure as—" He broke off.

Clear and distinct through the night air, sounding from some distance down the road, came the low, throbbing wail of a siren.

Brokay stiffened, stared at Sam West, with a sudden realization of his predicament.

The furry tail of the monkey tightened around his neck, and once more, the little animal began to shiver and emit low, chattering sounds of terror.

"Switch out that light," said Sam West. "Someone's heard all that commotion we've been raising. Get started."

Brokay hesitated. The gun jabbed into the small of his back. "I'm running things now," said the burglar. "Get that light off, or the cops will find two stiffs here instead of one."

Brokay switched off the light.

"Walk ahead of me," said Sam West, "and make it snappy. Make for that window we came out of. I'll give you the light."

TTE snapped on the flashlight, showing the carpeted floor. The gun jabbed into Brokay's back. Brokay walked rapidly across the corridor.

"Faster," said Sam West, and jabbed with the gun.

Brokay went down the stairs at a fast run, turned down the corridor.

"First door to the left, and step on it,"

forward and turned a key in a radio, which illuminated a dial. "We'll tune in on the police broadcast," he said.

He slowed the car, and, after a moment, a mechanical voice said: "Calling all cars . . . calling all cars . . . calling all cars. Car Thirty-two answered a telephone call to the residence of John C. Ordway. As the police car approached the residence, two men were seen to run across the lawn and jump into a light roadster. When police hailed them, they refused to stop. A shot was fired which apparently hit the roadster. Both men are young, probably under thirty. They are of medium height, and run as though they had received athletic training at some time in their lives. One of the men wore a gray business suit, and the other wore a tuxedo. The taller of the two men, who is approximately five feet ten and one-half inches high, weight about one hundred and eighty pounds, had a monkey which was swinging to his neck as he ran.

"It is not yet known whether these men were burglars or were merely prowling about the house when they were disturbed, but they evidently are avoiding the police, and should be picked up for questioning at all costs. Car Thirty-two is continuing to search the neighborhood in which the roadster was lost. Car Sixty-four will swing in toward Thirty-fourth and Central. Car Eighty-two will run down Central until it comes to Thirty-fourth. Car Seventy-six will run down Forty-fifth to Grand Avenue, turn on Grand Avenue until it comes to Thirty-fourth and then meet the other cars. All other cars will keep a watch for a light roadster. Car Ninety-one will divert from its beat, to* go to the residence of John C. Ordway, at Five-seven-nine Riverview, and make a report on what is found, after a complete investigation. That is all."

Sam West turned to stare at George Brokay. "That damned monkey!" he said, and slammed his foot on the brake. "Put him out," he told Brokay, as the car skidded in close to the curb.

"The poor little devil, he's frightened," Brokay said, "and—"

The gun in Sam West's left hand jabbed meaningly and savagely into Brokay's ribs. "Listen," said Sam West, "this is no time to run a debating society. I should have known better than to take on a damned amateur. Either get that monkey out of here, or I'll blow you wide open."

Brokay disengaged the monkey's tail from around his throat. The monkey, sensing his purpose, chattered and screamed, hanging on to Brokay's arm.

"Get back," said Sam West suddenly. "I'll blow the damn little brute's head off."

"You know what will happen if you shoot here," Brokay told him.

West cursed. "Throw him out, then, and make it snappy," he said. "Break his damn neck! Beat his head against the side of the car!"

Brokay managed to unprison the little animal's arms and legs.

"Get ready to go," he said, "I'm going to toss him out."

Sam West snapped the car into gear.

"DROKAY tossed the animal to the pavement. The animal screamed shrill rage. The car veered sharply from the curb and jumped into immediate speed.

"You wanted excitement," Sam West said, "and you're going to get it. We've got to find some place to hide—and what I mean is, we've got to take it on the lam. Every radio car in the city will be looking for us, and three of them are converging on this district."

"You know the routes they're coming,

so you can avoid them," Brokay pointed out.

"We know where three of them are coming, but how about the others?"

"I'll tell you What I'll do," Brokay said. "You got into this thing partially because of me. I'll give you a break. We can go to my place and we'll hole up there. The police certainly won't think of searching my house. I'm a respected member of society, and—"

"And don't ever kid yourself that this isn't a society murder," said the burglar. "That woman, lying almost naked on the bed, was killed by someone that's accustomed to evening clothes, and all the fine things of life, don't ever forget it. It's a society killing. We sure as hell chose a great time to bust into that place."

"You're the one who picked the time," Brokay reminded him.

"Yeah," said Sam West, "so you could get a thrill—and a hell of a time I picked—a time for murder!"

"Nevertheless," Brokay said, "you can't think of any place that's better to hide than my place."

"O. K.," Sam West said, and swung the wheel to the right. "It's just a case of any port in a storm."

The men rode in silence for half a dozen blocks, and then the burglar turned the car into Brokay's driveway. The car purred smoothly up to the garage and then stopped as the burglar applied the brakes. Brokay reached from the car, pressed an electric button on an upright post by the side of the driveway. The doors of the garage slid smoothly back. The roadster slipped through the doors and came to rest in the spacious garage. Sam West sighed and shut off the motor. Brokay opened the door and stepped to the cement floor.

"Well," he said, "we'd better look the thing over for bullet marks. They probably hit us. We'd better find if we can

disguise it so it doesn't look so much like a bullet mark."

He walked to the rear of the car.

There was a glad cry, the sound of a shrill chattering, and the monkey leapt from the spare tire directly to Brokay's shoulder, where it cuddled up against his cheek, wrapping its tail around Brokay's neck.

"Where the devil did that beast come from?" said Sam West.

"He rode the spare tire," Brokay said. "Poor little devil, he's shivering so he can hardly hang on."

Sam West grimly drew his revolver.

There was an angry glint in Brokay's eyes. His right hand slid to his own hip pocket. "No you don't!" he said.

The burglar looked at Brokay's concealed hand. "Why don't I?" he inquired ominously, his eyes glinting.

"Don't forget one thing, West," Brokay told him. "Before we get done, we may have to solve this murder to prove that we didn't do it, and this monkey may be the only clue that we've got and the police haven't."

The glitter faded from Sam West's eyes. He frowned thoughtfully. Slowly, he lowered his gun. "You may be right, at that," he said slowly.

CHAPTER THREE

Cover for a Crook

TI/TORNING newspapers carried headlines which screamed the news of the murder to the world. Gladys Ordway, a beautiful society girl, had been found nude on the bed of her bedroom. She had been stabbed in the back, with some long slender instrument which had penetrated the heart, and the point of which had even pierced the skin of the left breast. Death had been instantaneous.

The chauffeur, asleep in the garage, happening to glance out of his window,

had seen lights flickering in the Ordway residence, a light which led him to believe that someone was using a flashlight in the house. He had called police headquarters and the call had been relayed to the radio cars. Car 32 had gone to investigate and had surprised two men running away from the house. The officers claimed to have seen a monkey clinging to the shoulder of one of the men, but subsequent investigation had shown that none of the servants in the house knew anything at all about a monkey.

John C. Ordway had been attending an important conference. The servants had either retired, or, as in the case of the butler, had been spending the night away from the house. The chauffeur had had the evening off, but had returned at about eleven o'clock; he had been restless and had not slept well; he was awakened by some sound. He thought it might have been a scream, but could not be certain. He looked toward the house, saw the reflections of the flashlight, and notified the police. Gladys Ordway was supposed to have attended a masquerade ball. The costume which she was to have worn had been found in the closet of her room. No one knew whether she had actually attended the ball and returned to meet her death, or whether she had not gone to the masquerade. The police were making a check-up for the purpose of ascertaining. They had failed to find a weapon.

Sam West, clad in a pair of brocaded silk pajamas, sat up in bed, read the papers and made a wry face at Brokay. "Well," he said, "So you wanted excitement."

Brokay, fresh from the shower, with the tingle of youth and health on his cheeks, his hair still wet at the temples, grinned reassuringly. "I've got some more news for you," he said.

West yawned. "What is it?" he asked. "And when do we eat?"

"You notice that the newspaper men-

tions that the police have some clues that they are running down."

"Yes," said Sam West, "it always mentions those things. Those don't amount to anything. That's just a sop that the newspaper guys hand to the police."

"In this case it may not be?" Brokay said.

"How do you mean?" West inquired.

"When we started to run," Brokay said, "the monkey jittered around on my shoulder; he reached up and grabbed my hair. In doing that he dislodged my hat, and it fell off. I was going to stop to pick it up, but you jabbed the gun into my ribs and I didn't have a chance to explain."

CAM WEST sat bolt upright in bed, staring at George Brokay with wide, startled eyes. "Your hat?" he asked.

Brokay nodded.

"Now," said Sam West, "go ahead and pour it on, hand it to me right on the chin. Tell me that your hat has got your initials in it."

Brokay nodded. "And more than that," he said, "it has the name of my hatter. The police can trace that hat and can identify it, just as sure as I'm standing here."

The covers flung back as Sam West's bare feet hit the floor. He started peeling off the pajamas, reaching for underwear.

"We can't run away from them," Brokay said. "We've got to face the music."

"The hell we can't," Sam West told him. "You don't know what you're up against, brother. If the police trace that hat here, and start asking you questions, what are you going to tell them?"

"If necessary, I can tell them the truth," Brokay said.

"Oh no you can't, brother. We went into that last night. You can't explain what you were doing in the house."

"I might say that I was driving by

and saw someone jimmying the window; that I tried to stop him and he ran away."

"And then, instead of calling the police to help you, you ran when the police came up," sneered Sam West. "Moreover, they go out in the garage and open the garage door and find my roadster in there, with a neat little bullet hole in the rear of the body. Try and explain that away."

Brokay nodded. "Get your clothes on," he said, his jaw pushed forward, his mouth a firm thin line. "We're going to beat the police to it."

Sam West paused in the middle of his dressing to regard Brokay critically. "If you've got any shabby clothes," he said, "you'd better put 'em on. Hiding with you wasn't so hot. If we can get out of here ahead of the police, you're going to hide with me. The cops won't think of looking for a burglar prowling around with a society guy, and they sure as hell won't think of looking for a society guy prowling around with a burglar. Let's get started."

"The monkey?" asked Brokay as they started to leave the place.

"Ditch him," said West.

"Oh no you don't," Brokay told him. "The monkey has got to come with us. He's our clue. What's more, we don't dare to let the police find it here."

Sam West made a gesture of irritation. "What a boob I was," he said, "when I picked this house for a burglary. And what a bigger boob I was, when I didn't let you turn me over to the police. Why the devil did I have to get bats in my belfry and take on a dude apprentice?"

Brokay held out his arms to the monkey. The little animal, chattering delightedly, leapt to Brokay's shoulder. "Come on, crook," said Brokay grinning. "Let's go out and find some more excitement."

The burglar groaned.

CAM WEST swept his arm about in an inclusive gesture, indicating the room with its twin beds, the grimy window, the cheap pictures on the wall. "O. K.," he said. "This is home."

"Are we safe here?" Brokay asked.

"Safe as we can be."

"But, I don't get the sketch," Brokay said.

"It's a rooming house that's run by crooks. Did you notice the girl at the desk? That's Thelma Grebe. She's a moll. Whenever anyone wants to hole up, they simply tell Thelma that they're on the lam. Thelma gives them a room and if any smart dicks come around and ask any questions, Thelma gives them a run-around."

"What did you tell her about me?" Brokay asked.

"I told her you were on the lam from Chi. You're supposed to be a red-hot. You can keep in the room as much as you want to."

Brokay opened the wicker basket in which he had carried the monkey. "Come on out, Jocko," he said.

The monkey, curled up inside the basket in a neat little nest of rags, climbed up to Brokay's shoulder, made little patting gestures of affection with his paws on Brokay's cheeks and hair.

"That little devil sure likes you," West said, "but you want to keep him out of sight. We'd better fix a place for him in the closet."

"What I want to do," said Brokay, "is to find out something about this murder. I want to get more information about it."

"I've got most of the dope on that," Sam West said. "When I was talking with Thelma, she gave me the low-down on the thing. The job was pulled by a girl named Rhoda Koline. Anyway, that's what the police figure."

"Who's Rhoda Koline?" Brokay asked.

"She was employed as a social secre-

tary by John Ordway. She kept his household accounts and handled his social engagements. You see, the police figure that Gladys Ordway was undressed at the time she was stuck with the knife. Now, she wouldn't have undressed in front of a man unless it was somebody she was playing around with and she was a nice kid. The police figure that it was a question of some woman being in the room with her and sticking her with the knife after she'd got her clothes off. They started in on the maid, but didn't get anywhere because the maid had an alibi. Then they started looking around for Rhoda, and when Rhoda found out about it, she took it on the lam."

"They don't know where she is now?"

"No."

"Then," said Brokay, "they're not going to suspect us?"

"Only as being mixed up in it with Rhode somehow," Sam West told him. "If we keep under cover, the thing may straighten out all right."

"How many other people are in this rooming house?" Brokay inquired.

"You can't ever tell," West told him. "Thelma Grebe keeps her own confidences. That's why she's on the job. If it wasn't for that, she'd be found in an alley some night with her throat slit."

"You didn't get a paper, did you?" Brokay asked.

"Not the late edition."

"I want to get one."

"O. K., but be careful how much prowling around you do. You're safe as long as you're here in the house. There's a room in the front of the house—Number Ten. It's UJed as a kind of lobby and sitting room. They keep newspapers in there. There's also some magazines, and if any of the folks here get to feeling lonesome they go in and sit around for a chat. You can talk to anyone you see there, and you won't need to introduce

yourself. Monikers are considered nobody's business, except to the guys that own them. Don't ask anybody's moniker and nobody's going to ask yours."

"DROKAY put the monkey in the closet, left the room, found the door with the number " 1 0 " over it, and pushed the door open.

There was a table in the center of the room. Sunshine streamed through windows on the south. The rumble of traffic came up through windows on the west. There were half a dozen chairs in the room; the table was littered with magazines and newspapers.

A young woman of perhaps twenty-five years of age was standing at the table reading one of the newspapers. She caught Brokay's eye as he came in the room, and half turned away, as though trying to hide her interest in the newspaper, then she caught her breath, turned back to Brokay and smiled.

"Hello," she said.

"Hello," Brokay told her. "You staying here?"

"Yes," she said smiling, "temporarily. And you?"

"Temporarily also," he told her.

They both smiled. Brokay started looking through the newspapers on the table.

"I've got the latest edition here," she said.

"Take your time," Brokay told her.

"You might," she said smiling, "like to look over my shoulder."

"Thanks," Brokay told her, "if I may." He moved so that he could see over her shoulder.

"I don't know just what you're interested in," said the girl, "but I'm interested in this." Her forefinger swept across the front page of the paper.

Brokay, following her forefinger, saw that she was indicating the account of the Ordway murder. "You interested in that?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "Are you?"

"Just as a matter of news," he told her.

She laughed lightly. There was something almost of mockery in her laugh, and yet there was an undertone of nervousness; a certain throaty catch of the voice.

Brokay stared at her curiously, catching a part of her profile, the curve of her cheek, the long sweep of her eyelashes. It was impossible for him to place her as a crook. He would, ordinarily, have unhesitatingly branded her as a young woman of beauty and refinement. To find her in this crook's hide-out came as a distinct shock and surprise.

She evidently felt his eyes upon her, for she suddenly turned to face him. "I thought," she said, "you were interested in the newspaper." This time there could be no mistaking the mockery in her voice. "As a matter of casual news, of course," she said.

Brokay devoted his attention to the newspaper account.

There was nothing in the paper which represented any startling developments in the case. For the most part, it merely elaborated what Brokay had already learned from the burglar.

As Brokay finished reading, the girl suddenly turned toward him and gave him a searching glance. "Do you think," she said, "that the two men with the monkey had anything to do with it?"

"I'm sure I don't know," Brokay said, "I try not to think about matters which don't concern me. I have enough that does."

"Well," she said, "I think that those men are the guilty ones. They can say all they want to about some woman being mixed up in it. I think it was a man who killed her. You notice the newspaper account says that the window on the lower floor had been pried open with a jimmy. That doesn't look very much as though a woman had done it. Does it?"

"That, of course, is an interesting fact," Brokay said.

"There's no reason on earth why the woman couldn't have been killed, when she was undressed, by two men."

"Would she have turned her back to two men?" asked Brokay.

"She could most certainly have turned her back to one of them," said the young woman. "If the men had separated, she'd have had rather a difficult time facing in two directions at once."

Brokay made a little gesture of dismissal. "Well," he said, "it's something that I can't concern myself with. You said you were staying here?"

"Yes," she said, "I have Room Twenty-one."

IMJINDFUL of what the burglar had told him, Brokay made no effort to inquire her name, but for the life of him, could not keep from staring at her, and wondering how she could be interested in a life of crime, or why such a refined young woman could be, as the burglar had expressed it, "on the lam."

"I wish you wouldn't stare at me like that," she said abruptly.

"I beg your pardon," Brokay said, "I didn't realize that I was staring, I was just . . . er . . . thinking."

She met his gaze frankly. "Wondering just what brand of crime I was mixed up in, that necessitated my enforced stay in this house?" she asked.

He felt himself flush. "Not at all, not at all," he said. "Please don't think that I'm prying into something that's none of my business."

"It's quite all right," she said. "To be perfectly frank, I was looking at you and wondering the same thing about you."

He caught his breath, started to make an indignant comment, then suddenly remembered that he *was* on the lam. "Oh well," he said, "circumstances are fre-

quently peculiar and account for many strange things."

She nodded, place a swiftly impulsive hand upon his arm. "Please forgive me," she said. "I know the rules of the house. I know that it is quite all right to chat with anyone met here in Room Ten, hut, I know that I mustn't ask any questions. I hope you'll forgive me."

"Certainly," he said, "there's nothing to forgive." She flashed him a smile, turned and left the room. He heard the quick pound of her steps in the corridor and after a moment, the slamming of a door.

He sat down and studied the paper at length. There was nothing in it which gave him any particular clue, and, frowning thoughtfully, he refolded the paper, placed it on the table, and once more sought the companionship of Sam West, the burglar.

"What did you find out?" asked West when Brokay had seated himself and lit a cigarette.

"Nothing very much," Brokay said, "just more of the same stuff you've given me."

The monkey in the closet, hearing Brokay's voice, made shrill chattering noises.

"He's got to cut that out," West said.

"He's just glad that I'm back," Brokay said. "I'll open the door for a moment." He opened the closet door. The monkey came out in a long, flying leap, jumped to his shoulder, and made crooning noises of endearment.

Brokay was stroking the monkey when suddenly the knob of the door turned and the door pushed open. "Ditch that monkey," said Sam West, speaking out of one side of his mouth, while his hand slid swiftly to the holstered weapon which hung from his hip.

Brokay disengaged the monkey, literally flung it into the closet and stood with his back to the door. The door from the corridor swung open, and Thelma Grebe,

the young woman who had assigned them their rooms, stood in the doorway. She saw the tense attitude of Sam West, saw the right hand which had dropped to the hip and suddenly caught her breath.

"Good heavens!" she said. "I came in without knocking, and letting you know who I was."

Sam West sighed, and his hand came away from his revolver. "You're going to get yourself drilled, doing that trick some day, Thelma," he said.

"I know it," she said. "I usually wait until the corridors are clear, and then I slip in, and sometimes I forget to knock, because I'm in a hurry." She closed the door.

"What is it you want, Thelma?" asked Sam West.

"Frank Compton's downstairs," she said.

"The fence?" he asked.

"The fence," she answered.

"What does he want?"

"He wants to see you about pulling a job."

"How does he know I'm here?"

"I don't know how he knows you're here. It's some hunch that he's got I think. He says he's simply got to see you; that he has a job you can make some money on."

"You didn't tell him I was here?" Sam West asked with sudden suspicion.

"Don't be silly," she said. "Of course, I didn't tell him you were here."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him that you weren't here, that I didn't have any idea you were coming in, but, that if you did, and wanted to get in touch with him, I'd have you give him a ring."

Sam West frowned thoughtfully. "Compton's all right," he said. "He's a good fence. He's put me out on a couple of jobs that I've made money on. If he wants to see me, I have an idea it's about

something that would put some cash in my pocket, and I may need some money right now. I may have to get out of the country. Tell him it's O. K."

"Do you want to telephone him?"

"No, you telephone him and tell him to come on up, right away."

THE young woman turned toward the door. As she turned, Brokay stepped a little away from the closet door; almost immediately there was the sound of scurrying motion. He turned, but it was too late. The monkey made a long flying leap from the closet, grabbed the tail of his coat, and ran up the garments until he had nestled up close to Brokay's cheek, where he sat, with his furry tail wrapped around Brokay's neck, his hands caressing the short hairs over Brokay's temple.

"Good God!" said Thelma Grebe. She stood staring from Brokay to the monkey.

Sam West, his face snarling, pulled the revolver from his hip pocket, pointed it toward the monkey.

Brokay turned so that his head and neck were between the monkey and the burglar. "Take it easy, Sam," he said.

"I've told you to keep that damn beast in the closet," Sam West said.

"All right," Brokay told him, "take it easy. Thelma's all right. She knows that we're here, so it won't make much difference about the other."

Sam West stared at Brokay with a mouth that was clamped in a firm, thin line. His nostrils were dilated and there was murder in his eyes. "I should have killed that damn monkey the first time I saw him," he said.

"Shut up," Brokay said.

Thelma Grebe laughed lightly. "My God!" she said, "the monk gave me a start. I couldn't imagine what it was. What the hell, boys, there's nothing wrong about having a monkey, is there? I just didn't know you had one. There's no rule against pets in the house."

Sam West turned to her. "I don't want any misunderstanding about this, Thelma," he said. "You keep your mouth shut about that monkey. Do you understand?"

"Of course," she said. "I keep my mouth shut about everything."

"And a damn good thing you do, too," he said. "Go ahead and get Compton on the telephone and tell him to come up here."

Thelma Grebe slipped through the door, closed it behind her. When the latch had clicked into place, Sam West turned to Brokay and his face was white with rage.

"Damn it," he said, "that's what I get for mixing up with an amateur. You've bungled everything so far. I should have killed that monkey and taken it on the lam in the first place."

"You're crazy as hell," Brokay told him. "That monkey represents the best clue we've got. He's going to lead to a solution of the mystery one of these days." He reached up his hand and patted the monkey's head.

"I'm warning you" right now," Sam West said, "that we're finished. We're going to dissolve partnership."

"O. K. by me," Brokay said. "Personally, I'm going to clean this crime up. I might say, that it served me right for teaming up with a burglar that didn't know his business."

"What the hell do you mean, I didn't know my business?" West flared, irritated at the aspersion cast on his professional ability.

Brokay laughed. "I was just kidding," he said, "so that you could see how it felt. Come on, old man and snap out of it. We're in this thing together; we've got to see it through together. Now the question is, do you want me in here when the fence comes to call on you, or not?"

"I most certainly do not," West said. "You get out of here and stay out for ten minutes, then you can come back. When

you come back, knock on the door. If I'm still busy, I'll tell you to keep out; if you don't hear anything from me, you can come in. And put that monkey in the closet and leave him there."

"I want you to promise me," Brokay said, "that you're not going to do anything to that monkey. You're not going to try to get it out of the way."

"Oh, it's all right now," the burglar said. "The damage has been done. I didn't want Thelma to know why we were on the lam."

"Do you think she knows now?" Brokay asked.

The burglar laughed scornfully. "You think she's a fool?" he inquired.

"Well, we can trust her discretion, can't we?" Brokay asked.

"A woman doesn't have any discretion," the burglar said. "But get the hell out of here and let me see what this fence wants. Probably he's got some pretty good job staked out. If he has, I'll take a whirl at it, and make enough money to get out with, if I have to take a plane to Mexico City or some place."

CHAPTER FOUR

The Fence

"DROKAY once more put the monkey ^ back in the closet, closed the door tightly, found a key that fitted it, locked the door and slipped the key in his pocket. Then he left the room and returned to the lounging room.

He had hoped that the young woman who had attracted his attention a few moments earlier, would be back in the room, but he had it all to himself. He dropped into an overstuffed chair, relaxed, yawned, picked up a magazine and turned the pages idly. After he had glanced through the magazine he tossed it back on the table and looked down at the traffic in the street below.

The rooming house was in a cheap district and there were numerous wholesale houses on the streets, through which trucks rumbled and clattered. Brokay watched the traffic for several minutes in idle speculation, then figuring that his time was up he got to his feet, walked back down the corridor and knocked at the door of his room.

There was no answer. He turned the knob and opened the door, stepping into the room.

Sam West was lying on the bed on his side. From the closet came a shrill chattering noise of simian terror. Brokay stood staring at the form of Sam West with wide-eyed incredulity.

The burglar was in his shirt sleeves. His eyes were wide open and glazed in an expression of terrific futility. His legs were spread apart. The left arm was flung up on the pillow; the right arm clutched at his breast. There was a stain of red on the bed spread, and a slight stain of red on the front of the burglar's shirt.

Brokay gained the man's side in two swift strides, and felt for his wrist.

The burglar was quite dead.

The monkey in the closet continued to moan and chatter. The closet door was locked, as Brokay had left it. There was no sign that anyone else had been in the room during Brokay's absence.

Brokay inserted his hand beneath the shoulder of the dead burglar and lifted. He could then see the nature of the wound. There could be no doubt but that the burglar had been stabbed in the back, just as the partially clothed woman had been stabbed in the back. The body of the burglar was in a position which was almost identical with the position of Gladys Ordway's body, when the two men had found her lying there in the bedroom of the Ordway mansion.

Brokay moved toward the door, having

no definite plan in mind, but intending to notify Thelma Grebe of what had happened. Halfway to the door, he heard the shrill panic-stricken scream of the monkey, and knew that the little animal was terrified lest Brokay should leave the room without opening the closet door.

He moved to the closet door, unlocked it and gathered the monkey to his arms. The monkey took a look at the body which lay on the bed and then, shivering with terror, buried his head in the collar of Brokay's coat, jabbering and chattering, keeping up a constant stream of low-voiced, terrified protest.

Brokay once more turned toward the door.

As he did so, the knob turned, the door opened and a man entered the room. The man was of middle age, with exceedingly broad shoulders. His head had been thrust forward until it gave to his neck and shoulders the appearance of a crouch. His eyes were small and bright, like the eyes of a bird, and he stared at Brokay with quick suspicion.

"Who are you?" he said. "I came to see Sam West."

Brokay started to speak, but before he could formulate the words, the man's eyes had turned to the body which lay on the bed. "That's Sam," he said. "Why—why—why, my God he's dead!"

HPHE man jumped back and stared at

Brokay with eyes that widened with horror. "He's dead!" he said. "Do you hear me? The man's dead!"

Brokay retorted calmly: "Yes, I heard you."

The man moved toward the body; stared down at it; touched it. "Murdered!" he said and stared accusingly at Brokay.

"Are you Frank Compton?" asked Brokay.

"Yes."

"The fence?"

"What do you mean, a fence? I make an honest living, my friend. I never touched anything stolen in my life. What do you mean, a fence? What are you talking about? I should sue you for slander or libel, talking to me that way. And who are you, in herewith the body of the man who has been murdered? You, a murderer, should talk to me about being a fence."

He whirled and started for the doorway.

"Just a minute," said Brokay, "I want to talk with you."

Compton's hand sought the knob of the door. "I don't talk with murderers," he said.

Brokay took two swift strides, reached out with his hand and caught Compton by the collar of the coat, jerking him backward. "Just a minute," he said, "you can't pull that stuff."

Compton whirled and lashed out savagely. Brokay blocked the punch, pushed the fence around to one side, slammed his right fist to the man's jaw. The impact sent Compton staggering backward.

The monkey jumped from Brokay's shoulder to the foot of the bed, where he sat chattering and jabbering. Compton, a powerful man, regained his balance, gave a bellow of inarticulate rage and charged with his fists swinging wildly.

Brokay, moving with the swift precision of a trained boxer, side-stepped, held himself perfectly balanced, snapped across a well-timed blow, which caught the fence squarely on the point of the chin.

This time the man went down. He swayed slightly on his knees, then crashed to the floor.

Brokay heard swift steps, the sound of the knob turning, then the door opened and the girl he had met in the social hall stood staring at him with wide, startled eyes. "What is it?" she asked. "I heard

the commotion. It sounded as though a horse were trying to kick out the side of the building."

Brokay motioned back toward the hall. "Please go out," he said. "This isn't anything for a woman to see."

She turned swiftly toward the still form which lay on the bed, then gave a partially suppressed scream. Her eyes bulged as they stared at the dead burglar. "Good heavens!" she said, "he's dead." Then, as the full significance of the scene registered upon her senses, she said: "Dead, just as Gladys Ordway died . . . and . . . there's the monkey."

Brokay crossed behind her, closed and locked the door. "All right," he said, "you're in it. Now you've got to see it through."

She turned her eyes to his, and he could see the startled fear in their depths! "Tell me," she asked, "is this the man who ran away from the place; the one who had the monkey?"

Brokay faced her steadily. "No," he said. "I am the man who ran away from the place. This is my monkey." He held his arms out to the monkey and the little animal gave a flying leap, cuddled up close to Brokay's cheek.

PHILIP the fence on the floor stirred, moaned and sat up. He was still punch-groggy. Brokay surveyed him for a moment, then turned to the girl. "Now," he said, "I'm going to find out about you. I know I'm not supposed to ask questions, but you were interested in this murder, and I want to know—"

"Who I am?" asked the girl.

"Yes," he said.

"I," she told him, "am Rhoda Koline."

Brokay felt his own eyes growing wide.

"Yes," she said, speaking hastily, as though it were a relief to get the words out, now that she had started, "I'm Rhoda Koline. I was the social secretary for

John Ordway. I'm the one that the police are looking for. I came here, because I understood it would be a safe place to hide, until the police could get the mystery solved."

"How did you come here?" Brokay asked. "How did it happen that you knew of this place?"

"Thelma Grebe," she said, "brought me here."

"You knew Thelma Grebe before, then?"

"Yes."

"How did it happen that she—"

Frank Compton moaned, tried to get to his feet, and finally was successful. He stood swaying and holding on to the foot of the bed.

Brokay turned to him. "Look here," he said, "you've got some explaining to do. You were supposed to have entered this room some little time ago. What detained you?"

"None of your business," said Compton thickly. "You're a murderer; I'm going to see that you don't pin this crime on me."

"I thought so," Brokay said. "You're trying to make excuses before there's even been an accusation. I didn't accuse you of murdering him."

"Of course you didn't," Compton said, his eyes commencing to lose some of their dazed appearance. "I'm the one that accused *you* of murdering him. How could I have murdered him? You were here in the room when I came in. You were the one who murdered him."

"I'm not so certain about this business," Brokay said. "You were supposed to have entered the room some time ago. You could have come in and killed him, then walked out, and returned, pretending that you were just entering the room."

The fence laughed sarcastically. "Sure, sure," he said, "I could have gone ahead and killed him and then come back so that

you could catch me. And what could you have done, my friend, while you were here in the room? You were the one that shared the room with this man. You have either got to show who did the murder, or else you're going to be held responsible for it."

"I left the room," Brokay said. "I left the room because you were coming in and Sam West wanted to talk with you where there wouldn't be any witnesses to overhear the conversation."

"Baloney!" said Compton. He started for the door.

"You're not leaving just yet," Brokay said.

"The hell I'm not!" Compton blazed at him.

"When I'm ready to notify the police," Brokay said, "I'll notify them."

"Police? Police? Who's talking about the police?" said the fence. "You aren't in a place now where you can call the police, my friend. Nobody calls the police here."

"There's been a murder committed," Brokay pointed out.

"That doesn't make any difference," Compton said. "The body isn't going to be found here. The police aren't going to be notified. What will happen will be that the body will be put in an automobile and taken somewhere tonight. It'll be dumped by the side of a road somewhere in the country and the police will find him in the morning. But in the meantime, my friend you are responsible. You have got to answer to the people here in the house—not to the police. This man has friends; I am his friend; he had other friends. You have got to explain to those friends. This is something that's different from the police, you understand. This is something that is handled as a matter of friendship."

"And you're going to try and hold me responsible?" Brokay asked.

"You are responsible," said the fence. "You know it."

"And where are you going now?" Brokay asked with ominous softness.

"I'm going to report to Thelma Grebe. She'll make arrangements to dispose of the body, but you are going to be held responsible, my friend, don't you forget that. You have to—"

[His hand once more groped for the knob of the door, and once more Brokay grabbed him by the collar of the coat, jerked him back.

"Listen," he said, "you're not going to leave this room until—"

The fence jerked up his knee in a vicious kick to the groin. Brokay managed to block it. His left fist lashed out; Compton's apelike arms dropped about Brokay's back. The two men swayed in a struggle. The monkey, once more jumping to the bed, screamed and chattered.

Compton was a man of great strength. With Brokay in his arms, he was more than a match for the lithe activity of the millionaire clubman, but Brokay managed to get his head down so that the top of it was pushing against Compton's chin. He arched his back, straining the muscles, gradually pushed Compton away. He freed his own arms, sent a short jabbing left and right to the ribs.

Compton groaned, released his hold and swayed, and, as he staggered groggily, Brokay stepped in and snapped over a businesslike right which clicked on the side of Compton's jaw.

As the fence went limp, Brokay stepped in and held the slumping body in his arms.

He turned to Rhoda Koline. "Please," he said, "stand by me. Let's get out of this thing together."

"What do you want me to do?" she asked.

"Tear up that pillow slip into strips," he said. "I'm going to tie this man and gag him."

She did not hesitate even for a moment, but stepped quickly to the bed, pulled the slip from one of the pillows and ripped it into strips. Brokay tied and gagged the fence, and Rhoda Koline held the door of the closet open while Brokay pushed the man into the dark interior, closed and locked the door.

He turned to Rhoda Koline. "Now," he said, "let's get down to brass tacks."

"How do you mean?" she asked.

"I want your story," he told her.

"There isn't any," she said. "I had some friends there at the house. I wasn't supposed to be home; I was supposed to be out somewhere. Then we heard a commotion. There was the sound of a siren, the noise of a shot, and automobiles speeding away. We went to see what the trouble was and we found Gladys Ordway."

"Who do you mean by 'we'?" asked Brokay.

"Thelma Grebe and myself," she said.

"You're friendly with Thelma Grebe?"

"Yes."

"How long have you known her?"

"Not very long. I got acquainted with her in rather a peculiar manner. Thelma, I think, has clung to me. She wanted to get away from this life. I guess I'm the only friend that she has who isn't connected in some way with crooks or gangsters."

"And she suggested that you come here?" Brokay asked.

"Yes. Just as soon as she saw the body, she knew that there was going to be trouble. You see, I wasn't supposed to be at the house at all."

"Were there any men in the party?" asked Brokay.

"No," she said, "just Thelma and myself."

"What I can't understand," Brokay said, "is why you didn't stay and explain the situation to the police."

"I couldn't very well," she said.

"Why?"

She met his gaze squarely. "Because of Thelma," she said. "Don't you understand? Thelma was there with me. Thelma was a known moll. She was the companion of crooks. I was supposed to be out, yet the police would have found that I was in the house; would have found that I had this woman with me. You can see what would have happened."

Brokay nodded slowly. "Yes," he said, "I can see complications. But it would still seem to me that—"

"Thelma told me," she said, "that the case was bound to be cleared up within a short time; that if I would go with her, she could promise me sanctuary until everything had been explained."

"It sounds to me," Brokay said bluntly, "like damn poor advice."

She stared steadily at him and smiled slightly. "Well," she said, "now I'll hear your story."

CHAPTER FIVE

Time for Murder

BROKAY told her his story; told it without embellishment, without any elaborate explanations, giving her merely an outline of what happened. She stood staring at him steadily.

"What's the matter?" asked Brokay.

"I think," she said, "that you at least owe me a certain amount of frankness. I have been frank with you; you should be frank with me."

"But I have been frank with you."

"The story that you have told me," she said, "is probably the most improbable yarn I have ever heard."

Brokay realized, then, the utter hopelessness of expecting the police to believe his story. "I'm sorry," he said stiffly, "if you don't believe me. It's the only story I can offer."

She stood staring at him for several seconds. Finally she said: "I'm going to believe you, Mr. Brokay. My reason tells me I shouldn't, but there's something about you that makes me believe you in spite of myself."

"Thank you," he said, still with that stiff formality.

"But," she went on, "you could never tell that to the police."

"I know it," he said.

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

Brokay turned to the monkey. "That," he said, "is the only clue. Apparently the monkey didn't belong to Gladys Ordway."

"No," she said, "the monkey didn't belong to Gladys Ordway, I know that, because I was in the house with her. I saw her just a few hours before she was killed. She didn't have any such pet as this."

"Then," said Brokay, "it stands to reason that the monkey was introduced into the house by the murderer."

"But why on earth would a murderer bring a monkey to the house?"

"I don't know."

"And why would the monkey remain after the murder had been committed?"

"I think," Brokay said, "I can give you some explanation of that. Monkeys are really sensitive animals, although many times people don't realize it. When I entered the room, the monkey was sitting on the head of the bed, chattering in blind terror. What's more, the murder had been committed but a few minutes before I entered the room. That means that the murderer must have been in the room when we entered the house; perhaps heard us on the stairs, or saw the beam of our flashlight as we came toward the room. He had to make his escape."

"And you mean he was trying to catch the monkey?"

"Yes, the monkey had become terrified when he committed the crime. It had run

from him. He had tried to recapture the animal, and then he heard us. He had to escape and leave the monkey there."

"That," she said, "sounds reasonable. But I still can't understand why the murderer should have taken the monkey with him, or who the murderer was, or what the motive for the murder was."

Brokay's eyes glinted. "Well," he said, "I'm going to do some detective work of my own. There's one thing that's a cinch, I'm in this thing up to my necktie and I've got to get out. The only way I can do it is by finding out what actually did happen."

He crossed to the telephone which set on the table by the window.

"Take the classified index, Miss Kokhe," he said, "and read down through the pet stores. I'm going to call them up one at a time. You give me the numbers."

"What's the idea?" she asked.

"The idea is," he said, "that this monkey must originally have come from a pet store. I don't think that the murderer had owned the monkey very long; certainly not long enough to have won the confidence of the little animal; not long enough to have learned very much about him. I'm acting on the theory that the monkey was sold recently."

"I can't understand just how you can figure that," she said. "I see that there's something to be said in favor of it, but—"

"Nevertheless," he interrupted, "that's the only theory we've got to work on, and we're going to work on it."

QHE opened the telephone book, ran her finger down the classified directory, and said: "All right, here's the first one—Drexel Four-o-six-two."

He dialed the number, and, when a voice answered, said: "I am trying to get some information about a monkey that was sold from your store within the last week. Have you a record of such sales?"

: "We haven't sold any monkey during the past week," the man said. "It's been a month since we made a sale of a monkey. You understand that at this particular season of the year the demand isn't brisk, and we very seldom sell monkeys. Usually we handle them on order."

"Thank you," said Brokay, and hung up.

Rhoda Koline gave him the next number. Brokay call it. The result was the same. The third store had sold a monkey within the last week. Brokay got a description of the monkey and of the person who had bought it, together with the address. The fourth store yielded a blank. The fifth store had sold a monkey. The clerk couldn't tell the name or address of the people who had purchased it.

"There was a man," he said, "who had a slight scar on the left side of his forehead, a little star-shaped scar. He was carrying a cane. He wore a tuxedo—a man about forty-four or forty-five, I should judge. He was broad across the shoulders, but not fat. He was accompanied by a girl in a leopard-skin coat. The girl was ten or fifteen years younger than he was. They had been looking at this monkey that we kept in the window, and decided they wanted to purchase it. They had both been drinking. We gave them some instructions on the care of the monkey and delivered the monkey to them."

"Can you describe the woman?" asked Brokay.

"Not much more than that she wore the leopard-skin coat, and, as I remember it, had black hair and black eyes. It was the man I was interested in mostly. He was rather a remarkable individual, although I couldn't tell just how he gave the impression of being remarkable. It was something in his manner, something in his character."

"Tell me something more about the

monkey," Brokay said. "Give me a description of it."

The man gave a technical description of breed, species, place of origin, and so on.

When he had finished Brokay said: "Can you tell me that in less technical terms? I want to know exactly what the monkey looked like."

The man gave him a description which tallied exactly with that of the monkey which was at the moment clinging to Brokay's shoulder.

"Thank you," Brokay said, when he had noted the points of the description.

"You said you were with the police?" asked the man in the pet store.

"I didn't say so," Brokay answered, "but you can draw your own conclusions."

He slid the receiver back into place and turned to Rhoda Koline.

"Miss Koline," he said, "I think we're on the trail. You've got to do something and do it right away."

"What is it?"

"Find out if Thelma Grebe has a leopard-skin coat."

"Oh yes," she said, "I know that she has. She wore it one night when she was out with me. In fact, she had it on the night she came to call on me there at the Ordway residence."

Brokay stood staring at the dead body on the bed. "There's one funny thing about these murders," he said.

"What's that?" she asked.

"There's a single stabbing wound, made with a long, narrow-bladed weapon. It's too long and thin to be an ordinary type of knife. Moreover, the murderer has always had to work fast. He's had to thrust and then run. I am wondering if he is absolutely certain that his victim is dead when he leaves the room."

"What difference would it make?" Rhoda Koline asked.

"I'm going to show you," he said. "This

is going to be a little gruesome, but it's got to be done."

TTE walked to the bed, picked up the body of the dead burglar, dragged it half from the bed, so that it lay partially on the bed and partially on the floor. Then he took a pencil from his pocket, a piece of paper, and wrote in a rude scrawl—

"Thelma is mixed up in it. She notified . . ."

At this point Brokay let the pencil trail across the paper. He placed the paper directly beneath the left hand of the corpse, pushed the pencil into the fingers of the right hand, and then arranged the arms so that it looked as though the burglar had tried to scrawl some message just as he was dying."

"But," she said, "I don't see what you're getting at."

Brokay nodded toward Sam West. "That man," he said, "was killed because he knew too much."

"What did he know?" she asked, with a frown.

"It wasn't what he knew, so much as what they thought he knew," Brokay said. "Now I'm in exactly the position that he occupied, only I really know what they could only surmise that Sam West knew."

"In other words," she said, her face suddenly changing color, "you mean that—"

Brokay consulted his wristwatch. "I mean," he said, "that it is going to take three murders to make the chain complete. There was the murder of Gladys Ordway. We don't know yet what the motive was. There was the murder of Sam West. He was murdered because he knew too much about the Ordway murder. The next murder will be when I am stabbed in the back with some long, thin weapon."

"But when?" she asked. "Will they attempt—"

"Almost immediately," he said. "I think we can count on the attempt within the next hour." He turned and smiled at her, but his smile was grim and without mirth.

"What time is it now?" she inquired.

The smile remained fixed upon his lips. "Time for murder," he said in an undertone as the knob on the door turned quietly. The latch clicked back. The lock held the door in place.

"Unlock the door," said Brokay.

Rhoda Koline turned the key in the lock. The door opened and Thelma Grebe crossed the threshold. "There's a message," she said, "for Frank Compton. Someone wants him at once, and—"

She broke off with a quick scream as she stood, apparently rigid with terror and startled surprise, staring at the figure which lay half off the bed, with the tell-tale red pool which had seeped through the covers telling its own grim story.

"Good God!" she said, "it's Saul! What's happened?"

"I'm sure I couldn't tell you," Brokay said. "I was talking with this young lady in the social hall. I came in to see Sam. I found him like this."

"There was a man who came to see him," she said quickly. "A man by the name of Compton, a fence. Where is he?"

Brokay shrugged his shoulders.

"Then," said Thelma Grebe, "he's the one that did it. He's the one that's responsible. We've got to find him."

"Probably," Brokay said, "that means Compton was at least the last one to see him alive. The police will want him as a material witness."

"The police?" exclaimed Thelma Grebe. "Who said anything about the police?"

"Don't you notify the police?" asked Brokay.

"Certainly not," she snapped. "This is a place where we can't have the police

prowling around. We'll have to handle the matter in such a way that the place will never be mixed up in it. But that isn't going to prevent Sam West's friends from getting vengeance."

She turned and stared at Rhoda Koline. "When did you get in here?" she asked.

"You heard what the gentleman said, Thelma," Rhoda Koline remarked.

"DROKAY entered the conversation once more. "We had just this minute entered the door," he said. "We saw the body and turned the key in the lock of the door. We didn't want to be disturbed until we could find out what it was all about. Then you twisted the knob on the door. I decided that it might be better to let you in, because I didn't know who you were, and I was afraid you might make a racket if you found the door locked and got no response."

Rhoda Koline, playing her part as though she had been carefully schooled in it by several rehearsals, moved toward the body, then recoiled.

"Look!" she said, "there's something in his hand! Something that he was writing on—a paper or something."

Thelma Grebe moved swiftly forward.

"I'll take it," she said.

"Just a moment," Brokay said, and moved quickly, so that he was standing shoulder to shoulder with her as they bent over the figure and stared at the paper.

Brokay read, then looked accusingly at Thelma Grebe.

"Are you the Thelma that he referred to?" he asked. "That's your name, I believe."

"Certainly not," she said. "It's some other Thelma. What's more, that doesn't look like Sam West's writing. I don't believe Sam West could possibly have written anything after he received that stab wound in the back. That must have

been instantaneous. This is some kind of a frame-up."

Brokay shrugged his shoulders. "At any rate," he said, "the paper is evidence."

"No it isn't!" she said and swooped for it.

Brokay bent swiftly, caught her wrist with his hand, pulled her back and picked up the paper. He folded it and slipped it in his pocket. "Oh yes," he said, smiling frostily, "it's evidence."

She stepped back, stared at him with blazing eyes. "You can't get away with that sort of stuff," she said. "Who the hell do you think you are?"

Brokay shrugged his shoulders again. "I am," he said, "a friend of Sam West—that is, I was a friend of his."

"You're a great friend!" she blazed. "You were left here alone in the room with him, and he was murdered. That may be what you call friendship."

"I was down at the end of the hall," he said, "in the social room—Room Ten."

"You're a liar!" she said. "You weren't there at all."

"Oh yes I was, and this young lady was with me."

"This young lady talked with you a moment and then went back to her room," said Thelma Grebe. "You can't pull that stuff on me. You're dealing with somebody that's not a greenhorn, you know. I wasn't born yesterday."

She suddenly whirled and stormed from the room, slamming the door behind her.

"Quick, Miss Koline," Brokay said, "I think you'd better get back to your room."

"No," she said, her lips white. "We've got to get out of here. Don't you understand what's going to happen?"

"I understand perfectly" he said, "but I'm on my guard."

"No, no," she told him, "let's go. We can notify the police. Certainly they can

trace down the clue of this monkey. I believe that the dealer would be able to identify the people. You could tell your story, and—"

"And it wouldn't be believed," he said, interrupting her. "You know your reaction to the story."

"But it's different now," she said. "Please come. We can leave here, and—"

"No," he said, "you've got to go to your room, and keep out of this. Go to your room and promise me that you'll keep the door locked." He took her by the arm, gently pushed her across the corridor to her room.

"And you're going to stay here alone?" she asked.

He nodded. "It's my only chance," he said, "to get the thing cleared up. It's got to be done for your sake, as well as mine."

"But that doesn't mean that you should take any risks," she said.

Brokay gently but firmly pushed her across the corridor and into her room. "Stay there and don't come out," he said curtly.

TTE pulled the door shut with a bang, walked back across the corridor to the room where the dead burglar lay sprawled on the bed, and waited.

After a while, he thought he heard steps on the stairs. He braced himself and watched the handle of the door.

Nothing happened.

He frowned and looked at his watch.

More than fifteen minutes had elapsed since Thelma Grebe had left the room. Brokay couldn't believe that she would summon the police; neither could he believe that she had intended simply to run away and leave the place. He kept thinking of those steps on the stairs; there had been something furtive about them, something—

Suddenly he gave a convulsive start. He strode to the door, jerked it open, crossed

the corridor, twisted the knob of Rhoda Koline's room and opened the door.

Thelma Grebe was standing just within the doorway. Standing beside her was a heavily built man, with a small star-shaped scar on the left side of his forehead. The man was carrying a cane in his right hand; his left hand held his hat and gloves.

"But surely, my dear young lady," he was saying, "you can't—" They turned as the door opened.

"Here he is now," said Rhoda Koline with a quick catch in her voice.

The man faced Brokay. "Ah!" he said. "I was going to see you in a moment, my friend. I'm on special duty with the police. I am very friendly to Thelma Grebe, but I understand there has been a serious crime committed here."

"There's been a murder, if that's what you mean," George Brokay said, watching him closely.

"Where?" asked the man.

"In the room across the hall," Brokay said.

The man bowed. "Kindly lead the way," he said. "That is what I was trying to find out. Miss Grebe was rather indefinite about the entire affair. She wanted to get the thing hushed up in some way. I explained to her that it was impossible to hush up a murder." He gestured toward the door.

Brokay turned his back to the man, put his hand on the knob of the door.

Several things happened almost at once. Rhoda Koline screamed. George Brokay flung himself down in a quick duck. Something hissed through the air above his head, and struck the panels of the door with an ominous *thunk*.

The man behind Brokay had lunged forward with the cane. The covering of the cane, which, apparently, was wood, had slipped back from a long, thin blade of keen steel, and the blade had embedded itself in the door.

Thelma Grebe, realizing what had happened, flung up her arm, and sunlight glinted upon blued steel as she pointed an automatic at Brokay. Brokay, still crouching under the blade which had pushed itself into the doorway, went forward in a long, low tackle, catching the legs of the man with the scarred forehead.

Thelma Grebe fired. The shot crashed through the panels of the door, missing Brokay by not more than an inch. Rhoda Koline flung herself upon Thelma Grebe, struggling for the gun. The man with the scarred forehead crashed down under the impact of Brokay's rushing tackle. They squirmed about on the floor together. Brokay felt the man's hand pushing its way under his coat lapel. He grabbed the arm with his left hand. The man lurched and twisted. Brokay caught a brief glimpse of a gun. He flung himself to one side, smashed his right fist over and across.

Another shot rang out, the gun so close to Brokay's ear that the report was deafening. There was a shower of powdered plaster as the bullet struck the ceiling. The two women were struggling and twisting, Rhoda Koline hanging onto Thelma Grebe's arm with the grim tenacity of a fighting bulldog.

The man with the scarred forehead gave a lurch, got to his hands and knees, flung up the weapon once more. Brokay pushed the weapon aside, sent everything he had in a terrific right which crashed through, full to the other's face. As the man staggered backward and rolled inertly to the floor, Brokay grabbed the weapon from the man's limp fingers. At that moment Rhoda Koline staggered backward. Thelma Grebe raised the gun once more, this time not at Brokay, but straight at Rhoda Koline's breast.

Brokay lunged forward. His left hand caught the woman's arm, pulled it down and to one side as she fired. Then he

wrested the gun from her, backed to the door and stood with the guns covering the pair. "Call the police, Rhoda," he said.

CHAPTER "SIX

Brokay Entertains the Law

PRIGSBY, the butler, coughed apologetically as George Brokay latched the front door of his residence. "I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "but—"

A gruff voice from the shadows of the corridor interrupted. "Stow that stuff," said the voice, "we'll do our own talking."

Two men stepped forward.

"You're Brokay?" asked one of the men.

"Yes," said George Brokay.

"We've got some questions to ask you."

"All right," said Brokay, "I'll be glad to answer them."

"How does it happen that there was a roadster in your garage with a bullet hole in the back of the body? How does it happen that your hat was found in the grounds of the John C. Ordway residence? How does it happen that you were running away from the police last night, when the police radio car tried to stop you? How does it happen that there was a monkey clinging to your neck, and fingerprints that have been developed in the room where Gladys Ordway was murdered show that there had been a monkey sitting on the head of the bed?"

Brokay nodded.

"Gentlemen," he said, "come in. Sit down and have a drink. It happens that you gentlemen are just a little bit behind the times. I can explain those points very readily, but, before I do so, you might be interested in learning something about the murder of Miss Gladys Ordway."

"Yes," said one of the men, "we'd be interested in learning a lot about it."

They followed Brokay into the library. "Highballs, Grigsby," said Brokay.

"Go ahead and talk, guy," one of the men said.

"It happens," said Brokay, "that Gladys Ordway had been blackmailed by a man named Charles Giddings. She had been rather indiscreet. Some of the high-powered stuff, that is indulged in at times by the younger set. There were photographs, and, altogether, it would have made a nasty scandal. Giddings had been blackmailing her; she finally decided that she was going to report to the police; she told Giddings that she was finished and that she was going to tell everything.

"Giddings had an accomplice, a Thelma Grebe. They tried to keep Gladys Ordway from telling her father, or reporting to the police. She had reached her decision, however, and the decision was final as far as she was concerned. Thelma Grebe had been cultivating Rhoda Koline, the social secretary of Gladys Ordway's father. Giddings had a cane, the lower portion of which was rubber made to represent wood. There was a steel blade inside of the cane. While Thelma Grebe was talking with Rhoda Koline, Giddings entered Gladys Ordway's bedroom and stabbed her in the back, simply reaching out and stabbing her with the cane.

"He had been drinking some that night, and, acting upon impulse, had purchased a pet monkey. The monkey was clinging to his shoulder. When the monkey saw the blood, and saw what had happened, it became terrified.

"Rhoda Koline didn't know that Thelma Grebe had been accompanied by a man. Thelma had entered the house, using Rhoda's latchkey which Rhoda had given her, because Thelma Grebe said she didn't want to face the servants. Thelma Grebe was a moll, and professed an interest in Rhoda, saying she wanted

Rhoda to take her away from the life of crime she was leading."

"Rather a slick story," said one of the men. "How about a little proof for it?"

"Plenty of proof for it," Brokay said. "It seems that there was a burglar by the name of Sam West, who got a clue to what had happened. Giddings was acquainted with West. He entered West's room, shook hands with him and when West turned his back, Giddings ran him through the back and deposited the body on the bed. He was assisted by Thelma Grebe.

"I had a pretty good idea of what had happened. Giddings tried the same stunt with me. It didn't work."

"And your proof of all this?" asked one of the detectives.

"The fact that the police just a few minutes ago took Thelma Grebe and Giddings into custody, and that Thelma Grebe is making a complete confession, in order to save her own neck."

The men looked at each other.

"Call headquarters," said one of the men.

As one of the detectives went to the telephone to call headquarters, the other stared at George Brokay. "The thing that you still haven't explained," he said, "is how it happens that you were mixed into this and were running around through the night with a monkey clinging to your shoulders."

Brokay smiled at him. "That," he said, "is unfortunately one of the things that I can't explain. That is, if I did explain it you wouldn't believe me, and since it isn't any of your damn business in the first place, and doesn't have any bearing on the murder in the second place I don't think I'll try."

"Yeah?" said the detective. "Well, buddy, you may have another think coming about that."

Brokay shook his head.

"Oh, no," he said, "I think I'm in the clear in the matter."

"Then how about this car that was in your garage. What was it doing there?"

"Staying there," said Brokay.

"And how about this monkey?"

Brokay shrugged his shoulders. "The monkey," he said, "is a different story. It's really too bad that you're never going to learn the inside story about that monkey."

"Listen," asked the man, "how did you get wise to all this?"

"I got wise to it," Brokay said slowly, facing the man with steady, belligerent eyes, "by doing a little thinking that the police might well have done for themselves. I got wise to it by realizing that Sam West, the burglar, had been murdered because he knew too much, and that I could expect Giddings to try to murder me, because I knew too much. I baited a trap. I used myself as human bait. I knew that it was time for a murder, and that I was to be the victim. Does that answer your question?"

The other detective rushed from the outer corridor into the library. "It's true," he said, "every damn word of it. He's

caught the pair and turned them over to the homicide squad. They're at headquarters now. The woman is spilling her guts."

Brokay smiled. "And now, gentlemen," he said, "if you will excuse me, I want to shave and change my clothes. You see, I have a date for dinner with a very estimable young lady, who, because of some very poor advice which was given her by Thelma Grebe, was taking it on the lam. You see, Thelma Grebe wanted to have a goat, a fall guy for the police, so she persuaded this young lady to, as they so quaintly express it in underworld circles, 'take it on the lam'."

"You mean, Rhoda Koline, the social secretary?" asked the detective.

Brokay nodded.

"That's another thing you haven't told us about," the detective said. "Tell us some more about this Rhoda Koline."

Brokay smiled at them. "Gentlemen," he said, "your murder case is solved. The murderers are making a complete confession. Rhoda Koline is exonerated. I am exonerated. We don't have to answer any more of your questions. Frankly, I don't know very much about Rhoda Koline and that's why I'm taking her to dinner. I want to find out."

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2
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